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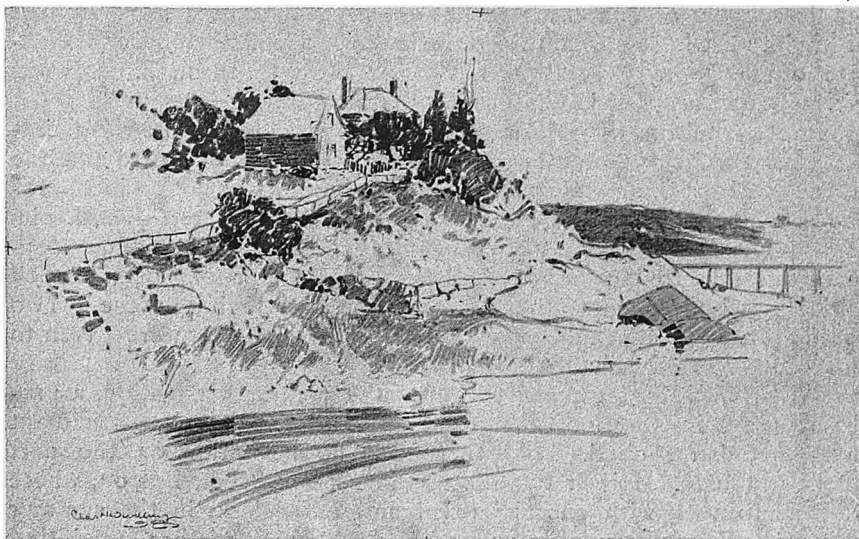
A WORDLESS FAREWELL
PAINTING BY R. LORENZ.

BRUSH AND PENCIL

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PENCIL DRAWING, BY CHARLES H. WOODBURY

CHARLES HERBERT WOODBURY AND HIS WORK

The theory that a man's choice of profession is governed mainly by heredity and environment has numerous exceptions. In some families the tradition of vocation is strong and continuous, but most American boys enjoy a freedom of choice as to their life-work which tends to make them their own arbiters, free to diverge from the paternal example to make their success or failure in new fields. In Charles Herbert Woodbury's ancestry it is difficult to find any conspicuous instances of æsthetic tendencies, which would account for his mental bias, unless by the exercise of some ingenuity we connect the fact of inventiveness, a trait prominently possessed by his paternal line, with the artistic bent.

The first of the Woodburys to come from England, about 1640, was a civil engineer, who laid out the town of Salem, Massachusetts, and who is mentioned in one of Nathaniel Hawthorne's romances. A later Woodbury invented that part of the planing-machine which gave it its greatest value; also a dummy engine and a submarine gun.

Like many inventors, the men of the family were whimsical, unbalanced, and not too strong at business. One of them refused a fortune for his patent, and died almost poor. On the maternal side, Woodbury's people came from Cape Cod. The Woodburys seem to have remained, with a few exceptions, in Essex County, Massachusetts. Charles Herbert Woodbury, the subject of this paper, was born in Lynn, on July 14, 1864. His early education was obtained in the public schools of Lynn, where he was fitted for college, but because of his interest in scientific things, he went to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in Boston, worked his way through, and was graduated with honor in 1886 as a mechanical engineer.

In every leisure hour during his course in technology he was painting, preferring this recreation to the joys of the baseball field and the river. Perhaps the training of a scientific school was not so incongruous as might be thought for the profession of a painter. The habits of thought there acquired have been for something in the development of a talent which, as we shall perceive, has for long been shaped logically with reference to a very definite and high purpose. Two evenings a week during the years of severe schooling were given to the free life class-work at the Boston Art Club.

When Woodbury elected to be a painter, after graduation, a professor in the Institute of Technology thought that there was a brilliant mathematician spoiled. But there was no hesitation on the part of the graduate. His first studio was in School Street, Boston, where he went to work with enormous zeal and enthusiasm in the summer of 1886. Fancy his elation when he sold his first picture, a painting of a basket on the beach, to Mrs. John A. Andrew, for twenty-five dollars! In less than a year he was ready for his first exhibition; and I remember, almost as well as if it were yesterday, that little exhibition in the old gallery of J. Eastman Chase, in Hamilton Place, 1887. From it some thirty pictures were promptly sold, for an aggregate of about a thousand dollars, and our artist was fairly launched on his career.

The significant thing about that first exhibition was that the pictures had evidently been painted more for the love of painting than for the love of nature. That I admired and relished them inordinately simply shows that my point of departure for the field of art was identical with Woodbury's, and that we both had much to learn. Not that there is not something to be said for the ardent paint-slinger. It is a good thing for a man to be on friendly terms with his materials. Brush-work has potent charms if it is just fluent and free enough not to cloud or veil the thought and emotion that it should modestly body forth.

Woodbury, from the start, had a touch that was painter-like. His way of laying pigments on a canvas or a panel so clearly betrayed his own enjoyment in the process that it communicated a like sensa-



PENCIL DRAWING, BY CHARLES H. WOODBURY

tion of gusto. He possessed, indeed, a dangerous talent. Precocious facility seldom leads up to anything great, and excessive cleverness in painting is a notorious pitfall. He must have realized that he had made a start in the wrong direction, inasmuch as growth in that direction had its immutable boundaries, for he soon proceeded to adopt



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a course of conduct which argued strength of character, making a complete right-about-face in his methods and his aims. He began to study individual things more closely, to press his nose upon the grindstone, and as a first result his painting became tighter and less interesting. There was an apparent falling off in quality, in tone, in breadth, in dash; but the period of serious work that ensued was a time of real training and preparation for higher things, during which

much that might have ended in meretricious and superficial performance was bravely put aside, and our young man got his feet firmly planted on the solid earth. He was not satisfied with an easy success. He wished to get at the construction of things, in order that he might get at the expression of things.

In 1888 he held a second exhibition in Boston, showing forty-five pictures and sketches of the coast of Cape Ann and the humble fishing-villages of Nova Scotia. Let painters wander where they may, I doubt if they can find anything much more paintable than the rough



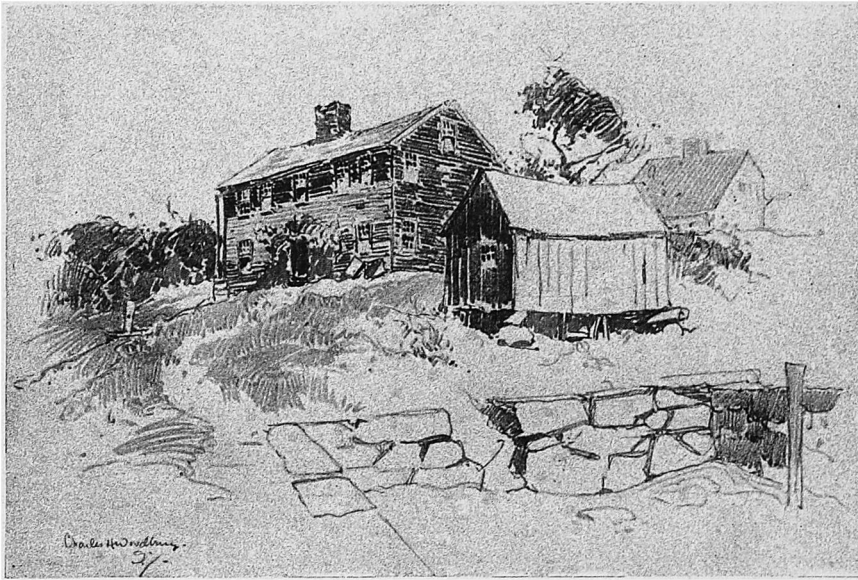
PENCIL DRAWING, BY CHARLES H. WOODBURY

and broken shores of Massachusetts Bay and the whitewashed cottages of the provincial fishermen, with their bleak surroundings, cluttered by boats, nets, reels, and the like.

The pictures of these regions were composed with an unerring perception of linear effect and that seventh sense which puts things together in a pictorial way. The distinctive characteristics of the place were grasped; strong light and dark contrasts were brought out, the coloring was brilliant and gay, and the work might have been set down as good, clear, candid prose-painting, chiefly enjoyable for the freshness of the first impression. I remember certain skies in which

the bold employment of the palette-knife struck me as prodigiously clever.

In 1890 Woodbury was married to Marcia Oakes, an artist of remarkable originality and distinction, whose influence upon his own professional tendencies and purposes was to become a constant and important factor in his life as a painter. The pair made an extensive journey abroad, traveling through several European countries; and in the winter of 1890-91 they made their home in Paris, where both of them entered anew upon courses of art study, the husband at Julian's academy, the wife at Lazar's school. In the spring of 1891



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Woodbury exhibited an etching in the New Salon, and the following summer was passed in outdoor work in Holland, where he found eminently congenial landscape motives, while his wife made a series of charming character studies of children's figures.

After five months of work in the Netherlands, they returned to the United States in October, and took a studio in Boston. In 1892 they went back to Holland for the summer, and passed several months in Volendam, then a primitive and unknown hamlet on the shore of the Zuyder Zee, not far from Edam, where the conditions for painting were propitious. Again they returned to Boston for the winter season. The next visit to Holland—the third—was still more profitable; they stayed there a year and a half, dividing the time between

Volendam and Laren. Laren is southeast of Amsterdam, not far from Utrecht, and had been made a painting-ground already by the modern Dutchmen, more especially by Israels, Mauve, Neuhuys, and Kever. Later, the Woodburys made a fourth visit to the Netherlands. After each of these trips they returned to Boston, exhibited and sold their pictures, and took a new flight.

An interesting feature of the last of the journeys to Holland was a bicycle tour, not on a bicycle built for two, but on two bicycles, all around the coast of the Zuyder Zee, and through the comparatively unknown provinces of the northeast, Friesland and Drenthe. It was the same season that Woodbury established his reputation as a man among the seafaring Dutchmen by making a voyage in a little fishing-vessel on the rough and stormy North Sea for the purpose of making marine studies. The seaworthiness of his legs and his stomach excited the candid approval of the Dutch sailors. A hail would come from the decks of one of the boats composing the fishing fleet:

"Is the Englishman sick yet?"

"No!"

"Gott ver dicken! Dat is gute!"

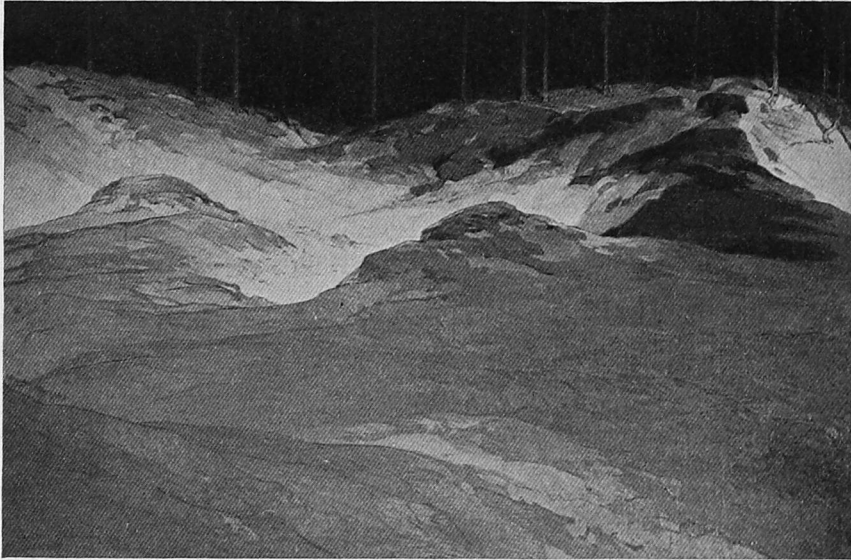
And there he stood on the heaving and sloppy deck, as the thickset little hooker plunged through the smother of foam and chopping seas, sketching for dear life. I have by me a letter written by Woodbury in October, 1895, from Laren, in which he describes the unique bicycle tour through the northeastern provinces.

"About the middle of September," he wrote, "we started with our bicycles on a trip to Drenthe, which is a province very little known, even to the Dutch people, as it is quite out to one side. It seems absurd to speak of anything as out of the way in so small a country as Holland, and yet it is so, for Drenthe has but one line of railroad running through it, and communication between the other towns is to be had by stage, or more often by driving. To give you much idea of what we saw would be impossible, but, as you may imagine, it was all very quaint. One is strongly reminded of Hobbema and Ruysdael at every step, not only in form, but in color. The houses have most extraordinary pointed thatched roofs, and there are groves of fine old oaks everywhere. You couldn't imagine more interesting wheeling, for there is interest at every turn. Fancy going sliding along a perfect road, with an immense heath on either side, and at last coming to some quaint little forgotten town, where, in all probability, no foreigner has ever been, and putting up at night at an inn that was built when our forefathers were worrying about premature and total baldness, and by way of pleasure enjoying a tremendous spree when the parson died! Frequently we slept in the town hall, and one very weary night we were obliged to sit up long, till the town assembly had bought and sold its manure. Around the hall are closets, three feet by six, perhaps, in which the beds are built, like



MID-OCEAN,
BY CHARLES H. WOODBURY
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bunks, and if you are Dutch, there are doors that you can shut and be comfortable and tight. I must tell you a story of your profession in Holland. The queen went north with us—that is to say, she was there at the same time. Everything was decorated, apparently for us—triumphal arches, flags, and so on; and all the people had on their best clothes, and every one was as happy as might be. Uniforms were thick as hops, and soldiers and drums and peddlers and street organs were everywhere. In and out amidst the crowds we saw certain men in full evening dress rushing about as if they were



THE EDGE OF THE FOREST, BY CHARLES H. WOODBURY

mad. Funny enough they looked in their hurry, for a dress suit in the market-place at midday is hardly what one might consider congruous. These gentlemen were reporters, and they knew that they didn't look pretty, for they petitioned the queen to be allowed to wear frock coats; but she said, No, she liked them better as they were! Wasn't that a horrid little despot?"

It is time to allude to Woodbury's first capital work in the line of marine painting, which was already under way while he was staying in Holland, and which we saw in this country in 1895 at the Boston Art Club exhibition. Born within sight of the ocean, he had not at first realized his vocation; but this painting of "Mid-Ocean," which was his first marine piece, was the outcome of years of unconscious observation of the sea. It is safe to say that if Woodbury's

name is remembered hereafter it will be as a painter of the sea. The sea has been his chief instructor and inspiration. During his first voyage across the Atlantic he had begun to make studies of the wake of the steamer, and on each of the succeeding voyages for four years running he continued to study and to sketch it—above all, to fix it in his memory. On the third voyage he succeeded in getting a fifteen minutes' sketch of the wake on a terribly rough day by wedging himself under a life-raft near the stern, holding the canvas down on the deck with his elbows, and painting with a wrist movement. This hasty sketch became the motive for the picture. As soon as he reached Laren he started a twenty-by-thirty canvas, and put into it everything that he could remember of the subject. Later he began his full-sized composition on a canvas four by six feet, on which he worked through the whole winter at Laren and Volendam. The picture was finished in 1894, and was exhibited at the Paris Salon that year under the title "Serpente Verte." At the Boston Art Club, in 1895, it appeared as "Mid-Ocean." Many persons then believed that it should have taken the first prize. The majority of the jury thought otherwise. Several years later it was bought for twenty-five hundred dollars by the Berkshire Athenæum, of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, where it now hangs.

"Mid-Ocean" may be said to be Woodbury's first serious effort to convey a personal impression of a great motive—nothing less than the majesty and beauty of the sea. For all who have seen and noted the color, movement, and form of the wake of a steamer the picture brings a stirring reminder of a splendid spectacle, but one so transitory and evanescent as to defy description and analysis. To me it has brought back not only the sensations of the visual nerves, but also the associated sensations of the other senses—more especially the sounds of weltering, seething, hissing, whispering waters, in wild liquid torment fleeing from the screw. Churned into a tracery of milky foam, making momentary patterns of lace-work, swirling upon a changeful ground of pale green, transparent and lustrous, it dies away in gradations of intense blue and purple as the turmoil recedes imperceptibly and merges with the dark tones of the huge waves afar against the corrugated horizon. Once more upon the unsteady deck one stands and looks, holding the breath while the ship sweeps down the long slope of a monstrous Atlantic billow, leaving its sinuous track boiling across that watery ridge, only to rise slowly to the crest of the next wave.

In "Mid-Ocean" Woodbury made the first of a series of works in which his chief purpose has been to give expression to the idea of force. He got his impression as he could, using form merely as the incident of the motive, and bringing his facts into organic order and correlation; then he resumed the whole thing, composing it, until it stood as a typical expression of a fine phenomenon. Truth, fact,

reality—these were present, but there was also a beyond in which the imagination could roam; the thought of the observer was not imprisoned this side of the horizon. So, to resume, the artist began by being a skillful and light-handed performer; then came a period of drudgery and severe training; finally he evolved from experience a working philosophy of art through which he could express himself.

There is something for the imagination to feed upon in all pictures that are pictures. The rest are studies. A valuable feature of every appeal to the imagination is the policy of seizing the stage of an



MARINE, BY CHARLES H. WOODBURY

event which just precedes the climax, leaving something more to come, on the familiar principle of the serial tale whose chapters always end at a juncture when something of interest is impending. Nothing is more essential to a painter in his choice of motives than the selection of an event, a circumstance, an action, a scene of typical character; so only can he put before us something higher than a mere isolated fact, a mere study of a place, a mere item. The meaning of inanimate nature is what we make it, but we can make nothing of permanent worth out of unrelated fragments. To be of enduring interest in art, our work must have something of the universal, which

is historical, legendary, and symbolical at the same time. To exemplify, after a manner, how this theory may be applied even to landscape painting, I cite Woodbury's later works, which have the atmosphere of history, tradition, and romance. Something has happened, is happening, will happen in the localities that he represents. The world is never asleep; the wind, in Wordsworth's quaint phrase, "will be blowing at all hours."

WILLIAM HOWE DOWNES.



ON SO-CALLED CONCEIT IN ARTISTS

There are few faults discoverable in human nature which the world at large does not impute to that unfortunate class of persons known as artists. One of the charges most frequently made against them, and most unhesitatingly accepted, is that of self-conceit. The average artist of to-day is regarded by the average layman as a self-satisfied and narrow-minded creature, who establishes himself on the pedestal of his own opinions, will listen to suggestions from nobody, and enters into argument with others only to assert his own superiority. Some good people go so far as to affirm that the trivial vanity of the present generation of painters is the cause of what they call the modern deterioration of art. Even Whistler, that acknowledged master whom many rank with the very highest, they denounce as incapable of producing work which is truly great, because, forsooth, he is sadly lacking in humility. They never weary of comparing the greatness of the past with the littleness of the present, and exhorting artists of to-day to turn to those of yesterday for examples of that humble reverence whose expression transforms a mere picture into a work of art. "Look at Millet!" they exclaim; "here is an artist truly great because humble-minded."

And we do indeed look in wonder and bow down in admiration before this man who kept through life the simplicity and sincerity of childhood, whom powerful influence could not pervert, whom scorn and suffering could not crush, whom praise at last could not spoil. Yet faith in the power God had given him to do his work, that very quality which armed him with such unyielding strength, is only too frequently mistaken for self-conceit. Millet himself, in spite of his retiring disposition, was denounced during his lifetime as pretentious, stiff-necked, and obstinate.

The public seldom calls by its right name that true humility of the genuine artist which consists in reverence for art. This reverence for art includes reverence for nature, and shows itself in earnest, never-ending study of nature's changing forms. From one who feels this reverence, no affectation of humility can disguise the conceit of that false artist who imagines himself capable of expressing art's message